



CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD

Meeting Minutes #710

April 3, 2008



Chairman Vernon Chong
Tom Moran, Member
Alice Astafan, Board Member

Jake I. Alarid, Board Member
Thomas Richards, Board Member
Edward Olson, Board Member

The California Veterans Board met in Sacramento, California at the Department of Veterans Affairs at 1:00 PM.

ROLL CALL

Present: Alice Astafan, Chair, Tom Moran, Vice Chair, Vernon Chong, Member, Thomas Richards, Member, Edward Olson, Member, Jake Alarid, Member
Chair Astafan presided.

OPENING CEREMONIES

- A) INVOCATION**
- B) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

WELCOMING REMARKS/INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Astafan welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. The Chair then asked the Board Members to introduce themselves and give a little of their background. She then introduced the Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs, Thomas Johnson.

Secretary Johnson welcomed the group and introduced his staff, Undersecretary Roger Brautigan, Chief Legal Counsel Rob Wilson, Deputy Secretary of Homes Stan Oppgaard, Deputy Secretary Women Veterans and Minority Affairs Barbara Ward, J.P. Tremblay, Deputy Secretary Communications, and Senior Staff Counsel Denise Lewis.

MINUTES

Executive Officer, Bonnie Kelly

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the minutes of the February 8, 2008 Board Meeting. Member Moran noted under New Business, Board Chair Election, it was incorrectly recorded that the Chair's term of office is one year, and should be corrected to reflect that it is two years. Member Moran moved to approve the February 8, 2008 minutes as amended. Board Member Chong seconded.
Motion unanimously approved and carried.

Approve the Teleconference minutes of the March 3, 2008 meeting. Member Richards noted that it was reported that he attended the meeting, while he was absent. Member Chong moved to approve the March 3, 2008 minutes as amended. Member Olson seconded.

Motion unanimously approved and carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Anthony Allman, Vice President of Student Veterans of America requested the Board's support of SB 1219 (Cedillo) Armed Forces Cal Grant legislation.

Member Tom Richards moved to write a letter of support for SB 1219 from the Board to Senator Cedillo with a copy to Mary Salas. Member Moran seconded.

Motion unanimously approved and carried.

Steve Rosmarin requested the Board also support SB 1680 sponsored by the California State Commander's Veterans Council. The Board referred SB 1680 to the Legislative Committee for review.

OLD BUSINESS

Avila Appeal

Mr. Avila notified the Board by mail that he was withdrawing his appeal.

DEPARTMENT FORUM

A. Department Update

Secretary Johnson gave an update on:

- State and federal mental health care efforts and services
- Actions by the Department for a 10% reduction to balance the budget and achieve budget reform through various program adjustments
- Budget increase of six million dollars for the Department in maintenance and staffing
- New construction grant requests
- SNIF opening in Barstow has been delayed, but should occur in 3-4 weeks.
- A contractor has been selected for the Yountville Member Services Building . Construction will start in May.
- Construction on the West Los Angeles Home is 9% complete, 27% on Lancaster, and 17% on Ventura. Pictures of the progress can be seen on-line at www.GLAVC.org.
- Meetings are on-going every couple of months in Fresno and Redding to keep the Veterans in those areas updated on the Department's construction progress, which will probably begin in February 09.
- The CalVet General Fund, which has not been profitable for the last four years, has made steady progress, with the administrative costs going down, and making a profit this last year.
- All of the surveys by USDVA, and the State Department of Health have been completed. The quality of care in the Homes has greatly improved from four years ago when 16 citations were on file, and since then there have only been three minor issues. The recent JLAC Audit has been completed and there were no quality of care issues noted.

B. Significant Matters

Rob Wilson reported that in 2003 the Department had 16 separate significant legal matters of litigation involving the Department. Since January 1, 2004 to the present, only three new matters have been added. One of which a jury verdict ruled in our favor, the second was dismissed by the plaintiff, at no cost to the Department, and the third is a new one.

NEW BUSINESS

A) USDVA Speaker Brandon Blackburn

Mr. Blackburn educated the Board on the claims process of the USDVA for Northern California.

B) CVSO Speaker Tom Splitgerber

Mr. Splitgerber, President of the CVSO informed the Board of the scope of the duties and responsibilities of the CVSO's.

C) New Committee Assignments

Chair Astafan reviewed the committees and assigned the new members to the following: Tom Richards will Chair the Legislative Committee and be a member of the Veterans Services Committee, and Ed Olson will Chair the Homes Committee and be a member of the Communications Committee. Chair Astafan assigned the Veterans Services Committee with the responsibility for awards and resolutions.

Chair Astafan requested the committees meet prior to the next Board Meeting to review and update their goals, and make sure they are measurable.

D) Status of Resolutions

For 2006-07, the Board issued 11 Resolutions: 8 to past Board Members, 1 for the anniversary of the Yountville Veterans Home, 1 to support enacting legislation for the G.I. Bill, which is pending, and 1 to support legislation for Mandatory Healthcare Funding, which is pending.

E) Home Applicants with Criminal History

This issue was raised by a letter from past Board Member Colin Shadell requesting a review of the Admissions Policy. The Chair referred this item to the Homes Committee for review, and will be reported on at the next meeting.

F) Department PSA's

Mr. Tremblay played the recently completed Public Service Announcements for the Board, and distributed copies to them.

G) Review of Board Policies

The Board briefly reviewed the Board's Policy Book and noted several reports that the Executive Officer will follow for compliance with the Department.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

J.P. Tremblay reported that the Department is sponsoring four bills this year, two which are relative to CalVet. The Homeownership Bond Act of 2008, which will, hopefully, get on the November ballot. The bill is dependent on the Federal legislation HR 3997 which if approved, will then move forward. The second is a debenture bill which is a legislative clean-up that delegates authority to the Secretary to borrow bond money. There is also a civil service employment bill that would allow Veterans who are honorably discharged from the military to test for promotional exams. The fourth legislation is a gold star license plate bill by Senator Cogdill. The bill would set up a funding mechanism whereby contributions will be made for the start up costs of a license plate that families who lose a loved one in combat would receive. They would only pay the normal registration fee for the plate.

XI. COMMENTS BY BOARD MEMBERS

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 4:40 PM.